



My name is Minka McCarthy. I am a nineteen year old citizen of the UKA, the most powerful nation in the world. Here the city stretches from coast to coast, factories and apartment blocks from the bedrock to the sky, ever stretching up and out.

Not so long ago I was a student at the University of the Movement Tekne. Tekne, our national religion and electric company, has brought our nation progress and prosperity unrivaled by any state past or future. Thanks to Tekne's wealth, one hundred fifty million persons now bask in the glory of the UKA.

Until recently, my exposure to these people has been limited. I am a student of the National Schools, you see. I did well in school, as my nation did well for me. The daughter of engineers, I too studied engineering. Though life in school was dull and undemanding, I enjoyed my room in the white scrapers of the North. There the smog is not so thick, and the buildings keep their concrete to a healthy shade of clean.

I started writing Tekne as a story called "Awarding Apathy" in 1996. A few of us got together at my old high school and decided it might be fun to enter a radical left wing piece (complete with punk rock sound track) in the drama festival for Spring '97.

So a bunch of us poured our time into the project, now retitled, every afternoon for about 2 months. Then, a week before the festival, we got the boot. The word was we just 'weren't ready.'

2 days after screaming to do radoo on his body, the drama teacher called me back and asked us if we wouldn't be too angry to re-enter. Re-enter we did. And won.

I'd like to thank everybody who helped make Tekne happen; those were some of the best times I've ever had.

You can have a copy of the script for 1\$ and a 45¢ stamp. My address until April is: 436 Albert St., Kingston ON, K7L 3W3, email = 7mm1@qlink.queensu.ca. After that you can reach me at my parents home: 320 York St., Cornwall ON, K6J 3Z3, (613) 938-7763

I hope you enjoyed the story,
thanks for reading. ♥Maggie

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presents

"Mission of Tekne"

by Maggie MacDonald

CAST

Minka McCarthy.....Sherri Lapensee
Gnya, Crowd Member.....Stephanie Potts
Lommy.....Kina Harwood
Patrie, Missionary.....Victoria Renner
Man #1 Crowd Member.....Jason Montgomery
Man #2, Crowd Member.....Chris Rhodes
TeacherDavid Renier
Crowd Member.....Allison Cameron
Crowd Member.....Melissa McRae
Missionary Man.....Larry O'Byrne
Reporter #2Scott Bough
Reporter #1.....Angie Alguire
Coffee or dieRachna Mishra
Lagra, tree person.....Brigitte Roussy
Manwi, Crowd Member.....Martin VanHelden
Cop #2Nick Briere
Cop #1Paul Charlebois
Doctor, Crowd Member.....Antony Barnes
Anarchist.....Luke David
Punk.....Maggie MacDonald
Fur coat Woman, tree person.....Christine Hyatt
Crowd Members, tree people, dancers.....Allen Price, Andrew Price,
Stephanie Jatsura, Amanda Marini

Directed by Maggie MacDonald
Choreography: Amanda Marini
Staff Advisor: Mr. Robert Poirier

Stage Manager.....Matt Poirier
Stage Crew.....Erin Bush, Shannon Fitzharris, Kelly Labonte
Set & Costumes.....The Cast
Lights and Sound.....Matt Trudel and Nathan Hollingsworth
Make Up.....Kristy Laverty, Miss J.McLennan

Musical Acknowledgments

Civilization Street.....by Culture Shock
Panacea.....by Union of Uranus
A Public Service Message from Shell...by Propaghandi
Berkertex Bribe.....by Crass
Flickering Pictures Hypnothise.....by Chumbawamba
Satellite Screens.....by Shot Maker

SPECIAL THANKS

Mr. David Runions, Mr. L. Bergeron Ms. Elaine MacDonald,
David Denny, Angie Benoit, Robbie Murphy, Mrs. M. Roussy,
Atony Barnes, Jack St.Thomas, Domtar Fine Papers Ltd.



I had a window through which between essays I could look out and imagine new heights, new buildings taller than before. By the ache in my chest I knew I needed something more, some bigger, better life to live. On weekend I would try to buy my way out of the void: new clothes, new discs, new drugs. But the money from home soon slowed to a trickle.

In August I received a notice from the headmasters office stating that my tuition payments were overdue. I hadn't been to visit my parents in over four months. I figured they were trying to lure me home through the constriction of funds.

I waited, putting off the visit to the last possible point, when the notice for eviction clung to my door, and my friends refused to face me.

On the last day before leaving, I ran into Macy and London in the hall. They, my friends, no longer called me.

"Want to go to the shop for coffees and glue?" I asked.

They obviously had grander plans in mind; with shining clothes and painted faces, they were dressed for seeking sex.

"And who's going to pay your way, Minka?" Macy asked.

I wasn't invited, and I wasn't excited to join them, but I had nothing better to do. Homework was pointless; my profs refused to mark my work until I paid my dues.

"Wait" I blurted, and held them to the hallway while I changed into my leathers.

The leathers clung tightly to my crotch, they made walking and bending a chore. And the salt smell alone was enough to cancel all hunger forever, but it was the most expensive thing I owned. Leather

goods were in short supply at the time.

London and Macy walked beside me in that suit, their own suits just vinyl and poly.

It wasn't a long walk to the Uni bar, but the gaps between silence and footsteps stopped time. The conversation was nil.

They didn't mention my eviction, but it loomed, spoken in glances, twitched eyebrows and coughs.

When we reached the bar they left me to myself. They were

gone between bodies, bathed in red light. The music, pulsing, failed to move me. The air was thick with sweat.

The drinks were paid for by tuition. I couldn't pay my own, So I sat alone, waiting. Soon some young man, white pants stretched tight for effect, came and sat beside me. He had brown hair and arched eyebrows. His eyes were washed out, pale. He passed me two pitchers and slid his hands down my sides.

I said nothing. I sat there waiting for Macy or London to come, to come to take me home.

I sat there, but they were gone, and I wouldn't see them again.

So I sat there while he cupped my breast. It was cold, skin tight and shivering, I shrank inside myself.

He explored me. I said nothing.

How would I phrase it...?

I let him buy my alc, I wore my leather suit, I came here and sat down. What could I say now?

I listened to the empty pulse of music, the hit song creation, a half-wrought distraction. I thought of my bed in my room. Then of the even softer bed in my old room, my bed in my parent's apartment. But I wasn't there. I was at the uni bar aching to ignore the body pressed against me.

I finally formed a word with my mouth, but in place of "stop" my stomach spilled instead. I covered his pants in my vomit, he knocked me to the floor and left. Then I threw up on myself.

I had to get home.

"Macy....? London...?" I gurgled. Where were they? Having bad sex by consent. People looked, but no one saw. So I lay there on the floor until a girl in workpants came to clean my puke.



Here in school class is learned

when I heard the sound of a plane in the sky
it was so late

But they were coming
They were coming!

Tekne Tekne Tekne
Their boots upon the pavement said
Tekne Tekne Tekne
The rhythm was steady complete
Tekne Tekne Tekne

I looked out the window in waiting
My eyes too dry to see

They set fire to the forests,
great valleys burning to make way for factories
They had come for the land

Not for me.

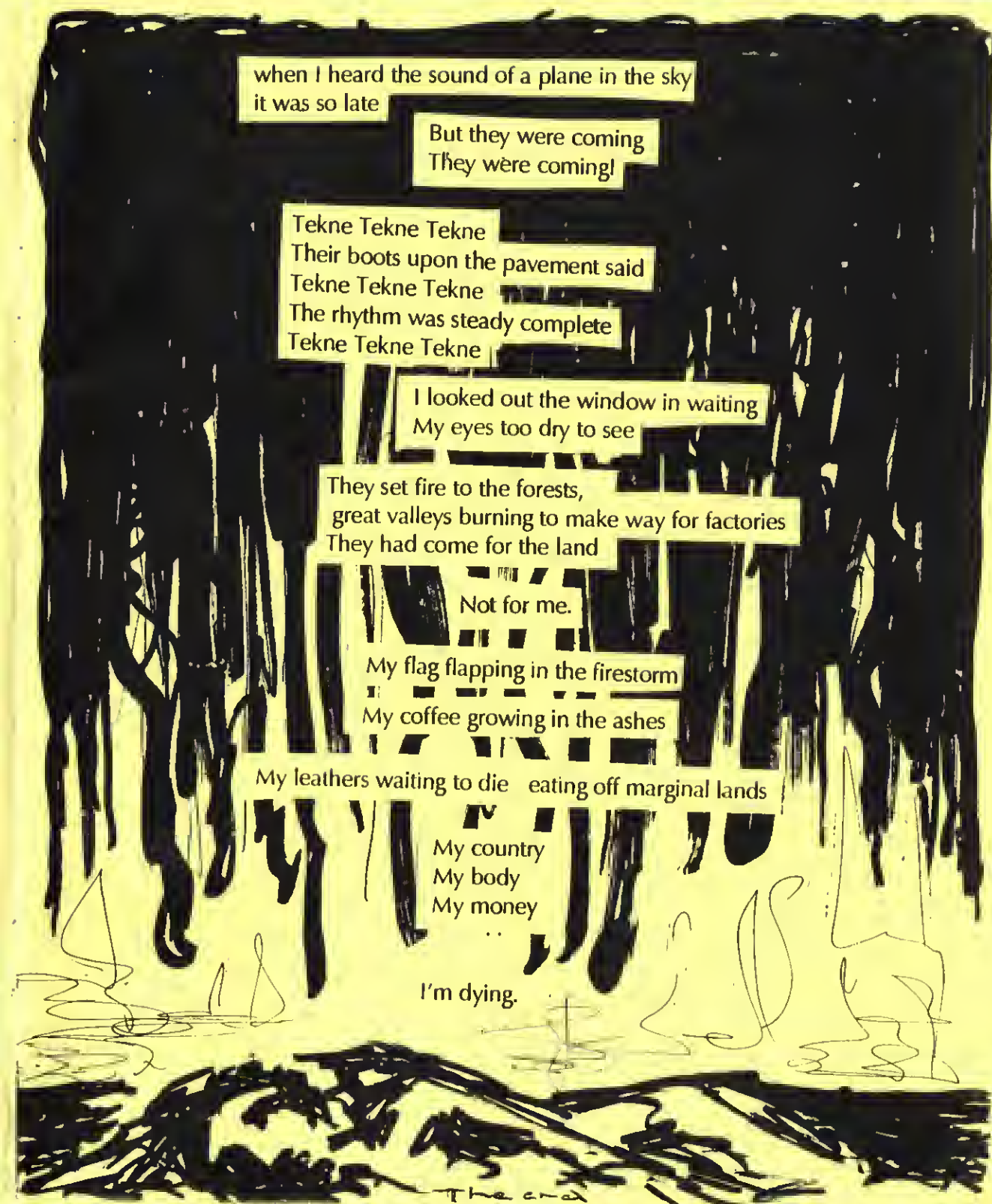
My flag flapping in the firestorm

My coffee growing in the ashes

My leathers waiting to die eating off marginal lands

My country
My body
My money

I'm dying.



The end

I didn't know why. I turned and walked away, my eyes above the heads of the Kadatis I passed on my way back to the hotel. There I showered again and again, to get the dirt off my skin. Dirt from the forest, germs from the streets. I was infested. I wanted to go back. I hated these people, these ignorant ass backward apes. They didn't deserve our help.

That night I threw up six times.

The sisters came down with it too. The extra pills hadn't helped.

I couldn't keep anything down. We had to go to the hospital.

On the first day the care was excellent. The doctors came to us often, checking us, watching us, speaking softly. But then our doctors got sick. And the nurses too. Extra beds were wheeled in, our room was crowded. And we weren't getting better.

I looked to the face of the woman beside me. I measured the passage of time by the growth of blisters across her face. When she died I lost track.

The stench of the rotting Kadatis hung like a big sweaty blanket. Bodies piled up in the streets.

Everything was slowing down. No traffic, or factories hummed, the forests outside were quiet. The heat and the smell were pressing me into my bedsheets. No one had been round to change them. I started crying, no one was listening. Then I was quiet.

I stared from my bed, out the window, where I could see a piece of street, and a corner of sky. Maybe the soldiers would come, the men in gas masks would return in the name of Tekne, to take me and save me and carry me home. I was the child of engineers, I lived on level 45, I went to Uni Tekne. But maybe my parents were dead now. I didn't have any money. But the soldiers would come in the name of Tekne. I wanted to go home to my room in the North, or the South, to go to bad bars and hear bad music. I wanted a coffee, or a burger, some beer or a painkiller. When would the soldiers come?

I was fading, drifting in
and out

She scurried in, and would have scurried out, as pukemops tend to do, but when she saw my face she smiled.

"Minka! Minka McCarthy!" She kneeled down nose to nose.

I shoved her away. A pukemop. Her smell was rank and ugly.

"Don't you remember me?" Her voice quivered, desperate.

I looked at the pale eyes stuck in the pits of her puffy face. pukemops. They all looked the same to me

but in those eyes I saw a ghost familiar...

She gave me her hand and I heaved my body up and stood.

"Minka-"

Then stumbled through her on my way to the door.

That night I had a dream of the girl, her gray eyes wide, standing in my mother's kitchen. We were small.

My mother's kitchen....

I had to go home.



Everything is a secret

The next day I sought my morning coffee at the station, but there was none. My eyes slammed shut the moment my train arrived, I barely saw the seat I fell into.

The ride was too quick. I woke to the smell of the smoke of the south seeping in. I couldn't get a first class ticket, so I shared my space with all the pukemops of the world.

By the time I'd reached the home station, my nausea had hollowed out to an empty ache. I heard the blood rushing in my head.

Stepping up to Coffee Time I found that booth too was closed. My body was heavy and slow as I dragged my ass to the lift.

The lift down there was dirty, and the next was dirty again when I switched lifts at level 10. Daylight never broke at level 10, the corridors instead were lit with tritium lamps, their green glow poured with abundance from the nuclear core.

The dirt runs down through the levels



And underneath are the gutters

Here politics are forgotten

I would have to do my share

They'd say.

In the morning it was my job to give out vaccines. With those drugs I found our cache of extra pills and I pictured the germs in my mind. The germs of Kadat, the doctor had said, were everywhere, would slip through the stream of my blood, would eat away at my guts. I took the pills for myself. The others wouldn't use them anyway.

I'd say
to myself
to justify

my sucking want

The other girls stuck together, but I went separately into the city core. Ads hung everywhere, I couldn't read the text, but the picture told the story: a woman, Kadati, holding a baby, a doctor holding a needle, and the flag of the UKA waving in the background.

Women with children lined up in the street, waiting for injections. I could help these people and their beautiful country I thought.

One of the women was drastically thin, her baby had such sweet brown eyes. I gave her some of my pills, the extra ones saved specially for the sisters. And I smiled at myself for that.

When I ran out of needles, I walked through the streets, giving the pills to the saddest, most destitute men. I saw a group of kids, my age standing at the corner begging and I came to them, my arms outstretched, offering the pills I'd saved especially for myself

They slapped my face and spit in my hands.

Our escorts, the men in gas masks, left us there in the city, the city strange and new. There was no one there to watch us, to see the mission through. I took advantage of this freedom, to explore the new world.

In only an hour you could walk to the edge of the industries, past all human constructs, into a wealth of green. Plants rooted in the Earth underfoot clamored for a slice of sunlight, twisted, rising falling in a dark and flowery mass. And in this mass the smells and sounds were layered beyond all possibility. I would lie on the forest floor, eyes closed, listening, never fully knowing how many calls, who made these calls, where lived the creatures stirring living breathing

And when I emerged the stars were shining overhead. The stars! Uncut by clouds, the swell of inky black met my eyes and filled me. Tiny lights like diamonds scattered, random, lawless, free. My head ached with images, too many, too much, too real. A birth I'd been waiting so long for unknowing, waiting inside walls, concrete brick and metal structures, sheltered by lowhanging sky. Here the Earth was boundless, human life a pinprick, minute and unimportant.

I walked back to the city to sleep.

The others were angry. I found them holed up in our hotel room, shuddering afraid. The people and the open air were too much for the sisters. They were too much for me too, but I braved them. They were mad that I'd left them.



At level 40 I switched lifts again. My parents lived on 45.

When I stepped out on their platform, the smoke was thicker than I remembered. I heaved to force it through my lungs. The air swelled in the dull sun that filtered down.

A man crossed the grate above, the loose dirt disturbed clung to my clammy skin. His bootmuck tumbled ever downward.

My hands were too heavy to lift to my face, I couldn't get clean before meeting my mother. The door to the flat flew open before I could knock. My mother had been standing at the peephole, looking out, all morning.

"Minkal! Finally back to your family! How's our tuition doing up North? Grades up?" She talked this way and that, but our eyes barely met. "Oh Minkal!" She'd noticed my face. "You weren't raised in a plant you know. If you want to look like a worker, get yourself a job." Then she skittered off to the kitchen.

I kicked off my shoes and settled into the couch. The TV blared, but no one was watching. The walls, the carpets retained their casual shade of gray. It seemed as though nothing had changed.

Then I saw it, smelled it even. A peculiar smell, unlike any factory fire looming. Ashes littered the carpet.

My mother stood washing her hands at the sink, her back turned to the living room. When she dried her hands, she washed her face, then washed her hands again.

"Where's dad?" I waited. No response. The water hit the sink again. The soap pump squeaked. And in the hall, a faint gasp. Then the hacking. Hacking, hacking hacking.

"Mom?"

No response. And in the bedroom where my father withered the hacking could be heard again.

'The college said my payments were overdue.'

The hacking! I cringed.

"It's been so long since you've been home.." she sighed.

I walked up and grabbed my mother's hand. Even wet it smelled of the smoke. The smell, I knew, was the cheap pot they gave to death list patients. It filled the grates to level thirty two. In the higher levels, death was quiet, and old. But here, on

45, my mother... and my father....

"Why didn't you tell me?!" I yelled and shook her brittle frame.

"I didn't know what to say," she shuddered, a child in my wake. "We haven't been working... We only have a couple months left..."

I stepped back.

Her voice slipped below the TV blare. "The lease is up in January..."

Buried deep in covers far away, my father moaned her name.

She trembled weak and cried. Little weeps unlike the wails she'd wept when I left to go to college. I couldn't stand the sight of her.

He moaned for her again.

She left me for my father's bedside.

Where would I go?

I'd never held a job before, I'd never worked day in my life. I had to get ready.

I washed my face there in my parents' kitchen. Their cupboards were bare, I found no coffee waiting. To go down to the job banks I had to fill my stomach first. Coffee, bacon, even alcohol would do. But now my parents had nothing.

There was a routine I remembered, I hadn't used it since childhood. As alcohol ran scarce above level 40, the was a woman who sold us rich kids our kicks. She lived down below, on level 33. I dipped into mother's bill jar, finding two fives and a twenty. I left her the fives and left for the lift.

Stepping off at 33, I remembered my first drunk. I'd been here with a childhood friend. Where was she now?

The woman who sold to us kids from upstairs, she lived at 520 B. I was 14 my last visit, five years ago. I had forgotten her face, with much of my youth, but when she opened the door it came back.

My parents lived on 45.



my seat. The women beside me were pale from lack of sun, bearing the smell of levels 10 through 25. Despite their clean robes and odor sprays, when they spoke, a stench drifted about the cabin. I ran engine plans and formulae through my head, trying to block out their presence. Their voices devolved to squeals, their squeals a ceaseless hum.

I was ready to stand up and scream

Then
I finally saw Kadat

A soft blanket floating atop the sea
The cities barely pierced the fleshy mass of green.
Here was a place so unlike
the concrete continent
that I had called my home

As we passed over valleys, I could sometimes see the black smoke of home. Bright orange flames licked the Earth, while the sisters of Tekne stared on in horror. The flames were not the act of terrorists, as many had guessed. The valleys were being cleared for a higher purpose.

We landed on a chunk of city, suspended between two peaks. The city looked in some ways familiar, but some people lived in stout houses And in the open streets I could breathe.

I was busy breathing, when our instructions were given at the airport. We were divided into groups of three, and sent to cities in every corner of the country. I wondered why our numbers were so small; converting populations was hard work, work that should require more than three sisters to complete.

away

"Take these pills too, twice a day, every day. Remember, germs are everywhere. In the water, in the food..."

I floated off to the room where the others were sleeping. I could smell bile. My mouth burned. For a while I laid in bed, rolling over to vomit off the edge. The others were sick on themselves. I slept and woke a few times, daytime was fixed in artificial light. Our numbers swelled to more than twenty, as time wore on.

A doctor came later, to give us more shots. But these were better. We stood up, sat down, walked and ate without pain. Everything was funny, nice.

We changed into fresh robes, and met the reverend for a sermon. We were leaving, he told us. In Kadat, we would visit public markets, pass out leaflets, and read aloud in the streets. One of the girls couldn't read. She would just pass out pamphlets. We had gifts to give them, care of the UKA. Batteries, vaccines, processed meats. We would be sent to the sick, to give them our pills. Our doctors, the best in the world, had given us tools to help.

On that day, we left the city-state of the UKA. Bearing flags we marched to the planes, then were lifted into the sky. Through the window I watched my metal continent, obscured by smoke, fading into the distance.

Cloud covered much of the ocean, but a few sparks of blue peeked out through the veil. I stared out, and balanced my body on the wallward side of



the sun
is obscured
by the smoke

"Minka! Minka McCarthy!" She squeaked, her pale eyes popping from the pits in her puffy face. "Minka Minka!" she squealed with glee.

Her face...

"Oh! I bet you've been to Uni Tekne! Oh Tekne Tekne! What a peach you are!" She took my coat in her hands, and hung it over a chair.

"Thanks Ms. O'Keefe," I said, seating myself at the table On the stove something fried. By the sink, the iron

steamed, the laundry basket overflowed. The walls were brown, the TV tuned to soaps. A pile of dishes sat soaking in grease.

"We'll have to keep it down m'dear," she whispered, "my husband's sleeping."

My attention turned to the bedroom door. There, perfectly pressed and clean, hung the copper's uniform, waiting to be filled.

"He gets paid by the bag now, they've cut the hourly wage. But the demand's way up for baggings these days, what with the commies and all. Coffee's real scarce, everybody's desperate for a cup. And a burger! I'd love a burger... but you won't catch me smashing windows. I won't give the terrorists their satisfaction..."

Not up for a tangent, I slipped her the twenty.

"We've almost saved enough to send for Patrie," her voice was back to booming normal. "He only goes downtown when the punks come up, in the afternoon," she said, as she waddled up to the cupboard. "And Oh! he's bagged us a good wad o' cash. I almost don't sell the alc anymore. We need the cash, see, cause Patrie's off and gone."

Patrie. I remembered her now. Ms. O'Keefe was the mother of the pukemop. Patrie was once my dearest friend.

As a child, I was stuck in the semi-schools. A difficult student, I spent too much time looking out windows, and my notebooks were filled with art-trash scribbles. The kids saw my dark clothes, the dark circles under my eyes, they heard the things I said, strange interests in science and fact, nuclear disasters and foreign geography, things they thought I made up myself. They hated me, and I learned to hate them.

But Patrie was different. She braved their ridicule to stand at my side.



She took their abuse, responding with silence. And we were friends.

But the other kids were too much. When they called me names and punched my face, I had to take comfort in something. I took comfort in my cash flow, my one claim to superiority, it gave me breathing space above their heads. I grew to hate poverty, and the poor.

I grew to hate Patrie's cramped apartment, and Patrie's puffy sun-starved face. She was one of them. I spoke to her less and less, using her mother for alcohol, before going home to my fat couch.

I stopped drawing in my notebooks and looking out windows, I dragged my mom to the rich kid stores. I sought to separate myself from the semi schools and the semi kids that filled their walls. Then I was accepted to the National School. My days as a difficult student were done.



We were dressed in white robes and walked down long halls, til we reached a white room,

with white floors and white walls. Our policeman escorts wore gas masks and rubber gloves. All I wanted was sleep, to bend my knees and collapse into dreams, but we were forced to stand and wait in line. I couldn't see what they were doing up ahead, but now and then a girl would scream, and I'd see a cop helmet moving, above the heads of the others. The screaming would stop, and a man would shout "Next." Then silence returned to the line. We advanced in inches.

"Next" my turn was called.

A cop took my arm and sat me down at the table. The table was white like the walls. A doctor came bearing needles. I stared into his eyes but saw nothing. He whipped off his gas mask to say

"A lovely face you have. If you don't want the pox, then you'll need these vaccines. The country of Kadal is filthy, God only knows what you'd catch without this."

The tip pierced my arm. At first penetration was painful, then I felt the liquid fill me, and I heard my heart pound in my head. His voice rang far



orgasmic fury, was canned.

Other bags, with other girls inside, were dumped around the reverend. Fresh young boys in robes removed the bags from the bodies.

"And god is ready to forgive these children..."
I looked at the other girls' faces. No blood or bruises showed. I touched my own face, and clumps of makeup fell from my fingers. We'd been made-up in our sleep.



"These children... beggars, thieves, instigators, who until tonight, had no purpose in life but to suck the soul from our system, will now give back what they took from the UKA. Tonight, they will rise up to help a people in trouble. To help the people of a tiny third world nation, plagued by drought, famine, and terrorist attacks. Only technology can save them now. And these children, once delivered by Tekne, will deliver his word to the people of Kadatl!"

The cameras closed in on our faces, the invisible crowd was chanting...

Tekne, Tekne, Tekne...

The fresh young boys returned, bearing the flag of the UKA. The Reverend walked between us, propping us up on our knees, tilting our heads to face the flag.

"Oh children! Do you accept the mission? Your mission? Our mission? The one true mission, the mission of Tekne. Do You Accept? Do you accept?"

Somewhere someone said yes.

"Do you accept? DO YOU ACCEPT?!"

I never cared much for religion, but there I stood to face the flag. Like the night in the bar with the strange man's hands, I never said a word.

"Do you ACCEPT? DO you ACCEPT?!!!"

"Yes. Yes. YES!"

I said it.

Yes.

Your politics are now irrelevant

And Patrie. A pukemop.

"Oh Minka, she's been out of line. She's not the sweet thing you'd remember."

Smack. My cup hit the counter.

"She was a s quiet as a mouse until just this year..." gazing wistfully into the cupboard, she pulled a bottle out. Smiling, she continued "Patrie finished semi school, and a applied at the plant... She still did her chores, and made good with her mum and dad," she carried her wares to the table, then dragged her chair over, a few inches closer. "But then..." her voice dropped, she leaned in to whisper, "I pulled her sheets out for the wash, and found... the sheets still wet- she'd had a man in her bed, Minka. Little Patrie, pullin that shit in her father's home."

My skin crawled.

"He never even let her date. How dare she take a man in that bed! The little skank. How she snuck his arse in here, I'll never know."

I knew. I looked at the uniform hanging from the bedroom door. My stomach turned. My fear of that man was instinctive.

"He doesn't know. If I told him, Minka, he'd club her and drag her ass down to the station. He still doesn't know why she ran away. It's cause I told her, ya' see, I told her I knew what she did, and the little slut just up and ran. Just like that..."

I downed my alc in three cups. Bang bang bang. I shifted in my chair.

"Well he wants her back here now. He had a man at the station trace her, and wouldn't you know it, she's up at the Uni, just like you. The UniTekne. But we need a little extra cash to have the man pick her out and cart her arse home."

I pulled myself away from the table, and reached for my coat. Ms. O'Keefe got up and took my hand.

"But she's not all bad Minka," she strained to convince herself "I've got an upright plan for her. I'm gonna send her to the missions."

I unpeeled her hand and opened the door.

"The mission of Tekne! Tekne, Minka, Tekne!" she called after me as I caught the lift down.

The job banks were in the Market; we learned about them in Econ 101.

Since the UKA established this automated service, there was no longer any excuse for unemployment. I thought I would use one firsthand, that day.

While riding the subway to the Market Central, the TV news caught my eyes.

"Hi, I'm Murray Weathers with *What's News?* On the hour, every hour." His eyes sparkled, teeth gleamed. I hadn't seen a newscast in months.

"Natahni-Communo terrorist are threatening to invade the country of Kadat. UKA will be sending missionaries, in the name of Tekne, to help the tiny third world nation..."

The pictures flickered, and I stared half-drunk as Natahni Marxists were shown, dumping barrels of coffee.

Coffee... I missed the taste. My body ached, blood starved for the coursing pulse of caffeine.

The train pulled into Market Station. The underground was overcrowded, everyone was buzzing and milling, strung out and confused. The topside crowd wasn't much better. The topside crowd was in crisis.

I was shocked at the state of the market. Policemen sweeping glass into gutters... shopkeepers boarding up doors... Almost all the stores were closed, their windows smashed, lights burnt out. Only World Burger and King Coffee were opened. The crowds that pushed through their doors mixed in the open square. Loose lines could be traces through the masses, but order had long since left.

The lights went out at King Coffee. Swarms of decaffeinated flag wavers were clawing their eyes in panic.

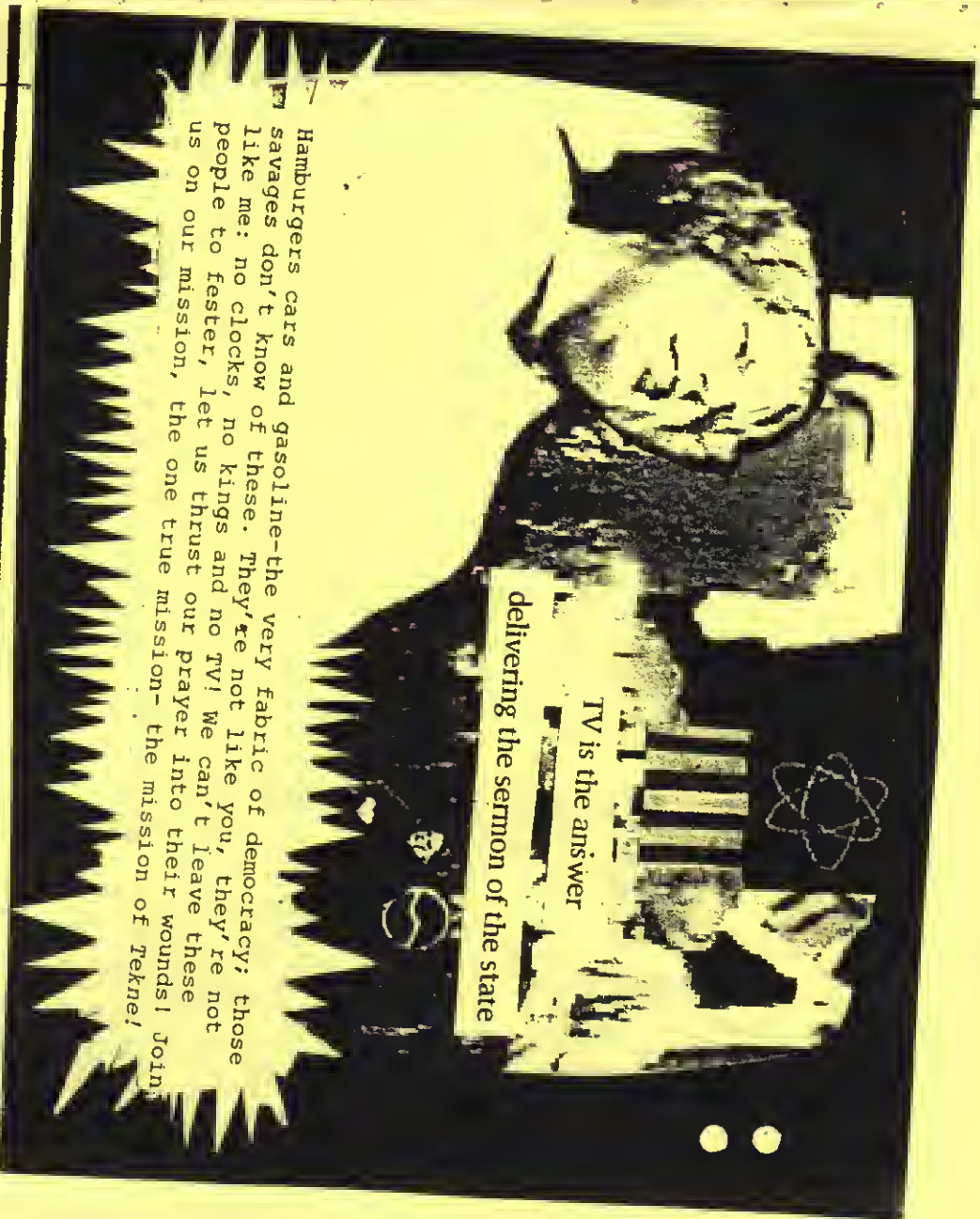
I tried to cut through the crowd to get to a job bank, but the lines formed there too, mixed with the coffee crowd, frothing. It was impossible to get through the people. Everyone shoving, everyone shouting. I had no idea what was happening.



the gift of technology. As a special favour to our Lord, with our prayers tonight, we will be sending seven lucky missionaries, chosen by God himself TO HAVE THEIR SOULS SAVED ON NATIONAL TELEVISION!!!"

With a "YES Yes Yes!!" from the crowd, big hands gripped me and carried me up to the Reverend.

"Under this cloth," he continued, "hides the face of a sinner. But when



Hamburgers cars and gasoline-the very fabric of democracy; those savages don't know of these. They're not like you, they're not like me: no clocks, no kings and no TV! We can't leave these people to fester, let us thrust our prayer into their wounds! Join us on our mission, the one true mission- the mission of Tekne!

the light of God hits that face..."

He whipped the bag off, and the yellow ribbon with it.

"...is the face of a child. A little girl."

The people oooooohed, the people aaaawed... I looked out through the blinding light and saw the soundstage was empty. The audience, in all

One cop pressed my face to his crotch, while the other was kicking my back.

"A criminal offense!" He yelled for the crowd.

"Let's keep this country clean."

The people clapped and cheered as he produced the black bag and yellow ribbon gag. I saw their faces through a stream of blood. They were hungry and fat, pumping chubby fists, shouting "Gag and bag! Gag and bag! Gag and Bag!"

The ribbon sank like a blade through my skin. I squirmed as my body filled the bag.

Catharsis. The riot was over.

In the darkness, I wondered: where did people go once bagged?

Some hours later, I don't know how long, I came to inside the bag. I heard feet shuffling, various stage directions called, the hum of a studio audience. I was soaked in sweat. Big lights beamed overhead. Though I couldn't see, I felt their heat.

I heard a girl crying next to me. Then a deep voice, an archetype vaguely familiar.

"Make-up? Make-up? Where's my powder?" He snapped. The floor creaked with the weight of his feet. "I need powder! I'm sweating like a pig here"

Then a second voice, small and wiry "Father, we're on in

10...9...8...7..."

"Shit."

"6....5..."

A holy chorus of synthesizers played, and the audience clapped wildly.

"Welcome children, to another day of *Moved by Tekne*. I'm Father

Randall, here to take your hand and guide you through the age of prosperity.

This week we have some very special guests to offer our Lord. Their ways are backward, they've gone astray. But tonight we're taking them back!"

And the crowd was one massive cheer.

The sobbing ceased as the girl nearby was carried away.

"This week, we're going to send a special prayer to the land of Kadat: a tiny third world nation, very different from our own. We send our prayers there because we're ALL God's children. And we must help each other, because not all of us children are old enough to know how to use God's gift,



No more burgers, no more fries, not one cup of joe left for sale, but I didn't know. They never told us about the coffee riots in school. When I was stuck standing in the center of the square, my senses obscured by bodies, someone smashed the glass at King Coffee.

I saw nothing, but felt my body carried between back, chest and shoulder of the men around me. I heard screams and gun shots. Tearing cloth, flesh compressed, I thought my bones would snap. I fell under the rushing boots, and turned my face to the ground. Then a siren pierced the horde.

Suddenly the square was clear. The crowd scattered into nothing before I found my feet. Then, less than a leg away, I saw a body. I'd never seen a corpse before, lest not one so fresh. It was a woman, my mother's age. I knelt down to take her pulse, but



her flesh was soft trampled, lifeless. Blood trickled from her mouth.

I had to touch her face.

The sirens wailed as if falling from the sky. I was alone in the square, a jobless, cashless kid, alone with a fresh corpse beside me. The black truck pulled up and out popped two cops.

They grabbed me and threw me, then pulled me up by my neck. One of them whipped out my ID to read my name aloud.

"Minka McCarthy" his voice traveled the length of my spine.

"Instigation is a criminal offense."

Bang. His boot met my back and my face hit the street with a crack.

The other cop shoved his face in my ear. I felt the wet of his tongue with the words

"And so is murder Minka."

He whipped me back up by my hair, so again on my knees I could see as the audience approached. From a safe distance, they came back to watch my beating.

